

Appendix F



October 30, 2007

Mr. Reid Montgomery
Director of Community Development
City of Rockford
425 East State St.
Rockford , Il 61104

Dear Reid ,

Pursuant to the request for public comments on the city of Rockford's 2007 CDBG program issued at a recent public meeting , I am submitting the following recommendations for your, Mayor Morrissey's and the City Council's consideration .

The City of Rockford CDBG program has remained substantially the same over the past 4 years . While some changes in allocation of funds has occurred there remain three major areas of funding ; Housing programs , Economic Development and Administrative Cost which includes the department's planning efforts. I believe this is a very narrow & restrictive utilization of CDBG funds. I understand the fundamental purpose of block grant funds is neighborhood revitalization & economic development for low and moderate income neighborhoods . While the CD department does allocate its funds accordingly , the forces causing distress in our neighborhoods are not limited to housing cost and a lack of retail opportunities . And , Economic Development efforts across the country have changed substantially in the past five years as the forces of economic globalization now rule not just Rockford's but the world's economy .

. The major obstacles to a healthy quality of life in our neighborhoods today are related to drugs , street violence, lack of job skills , access to health care and support for our community's youth to have safe havens , educational support and a positive view of their own future. After review of the 2007 proposed CDBG program I do not believe the program addresses these issues. Indeed , in 2007 there is even a carry over of some \$1.3 million dollars from past years budgets that have failed to be expended yet are allocated to the same programs Why are carrying funds and indeed allocating more dollars to programs that have failed to be implemented in the past ? The World has changed substantially in the past 5 years but Rockford's block grant program has not.

I understand establishing new strategic directions for any agency within the framework of existing commitments and established relationships can be difficult at best . But , I believe the time has come for the Mayor and City Council take a hard honest look at the current state of the City of Rockford's CDBG program . I believe it is time to re-prioritize the use of these dollars to better address the needs of our community.

In conjunction with the above comments I would offer the following projects as examples of how CDBG funds may be used to address the myriad of needs in our City's neighborhoods . These recommendation are based on my past experience as Assistant to the Mayor of Rockford , The City's first Director of Community Development , Director of Planning for the Rockford Park District and the development of a neighborhood plan for the Midtown & Jackson School TIFs supported by Swedish American Hospital . I mention this background because I do have both a vested interest in the coming years CDBG program and because I am strong supporter of neighborhood and economic development efforts .

In addition ,the suggestions are based on my awareness of various community efforts but are not a request by any of the agencies cited . I ask these suggestions be quickly explored with the responsible agencies to see if they are viable projects for 2007 .

Alcohol /Drug Treatment Center West Side : It has been recently suggested by community based organizations such as Cease Fire of Rockford that with so much of our City's crime and violence being related to drug addiction that the lack of treatment facility on the City's west side limits our community's ability to counter crime and drug abuse. Clearly part of any healthy neighborhood is the freedom from the constant presence of drugs , violence and crime. So the establishment of a drug treatment center in the Weed & Seed zone of the Mulberry Forest neighborhood may be of great value in taking back our neighborhoods . I suggest using CDBG funds for capital cost and a grant from the County's 1% sales tax to cover operating expenses .

Budget ; \$500,000 to \$750,000

A School Based Health Clinic at Lincoln Middle School : The UIC College of Medicine and Rockford Public Schools are currently finishing the design for a full service clinic at Lincoln Middle School . This project stems from the efforts of Swedish American Hospital to generate a healthier neighborhood and educational environment adjacent tho the SAHS campus .

Budget : \$150,000.00 to \$225,000.00

Patriots Gateway Capital Grant : Patriots Gateway Community Center provides vital resources and services to one of our city's most troubled neighborhoods. In part due to the loss of Corporate giving in Rockford area, Patriots faces a financial crisis where the Center is unable to meet it's over head cost . The Board and staff are in the midst of a Capital fundraising campaign to pay off the Center's mortgage .I believe no better use of CDBG funds exist than assisting this outstanding institution .

Budget : \$500,000.00 to \$750,000.00

The MidTown Arts Center : The MidTown Arts center will serve as the anchor facility for the new MidTown Arts District . Among other functions “The MAC” intends to serve as home for the Rockford Area Arts Council and it’s programs . The RAAC has an excellent mantra “The Arts are for Everyone” if would better if funding existed to generate “Arts for Everyone” . The Arts are important to low and moderate income families , especially the children, for the Arts offer inspiration and hope . The Arts can & do give youth an alternative path to follow rather than the way of the streets ,drugs gangs . The Arts offer a path of discipline , growth ,self expression and confidence which may spread through a young person’s life .. Our Community spends millions on youth sports teams and related activities . But do we even spend a million dollars on Arts Programing and Education for our youth ? The Arts Council’s excellent program for low income youth “Arts Space” has never had a permanent home, lets give it and the Arts Council one in 2007 .

Budget : \$200,000 to \$225,0000

MidTown /10th Ave. Park : One of the more exciting projects in our community is the recapturing Keith Creek as string of beauty through our community , the revitalization of 10th ave. Park and the green-way connection to Patriots Gateway center This is project that embodies the best of neighborhood capital improvements . The MidTown District has acquired 4 houses as a part of the development process and is stymied by the \$140,000 mortgage associated with these properties . The MidTown Association needs relief from this debt and the houses need to be demolished and transfered to the Park District or City of Rockford for maintenance .

Budget: \$160,000 to \$175,000

MidTown Arts Initiative: The Riverfront Development Group has submitted a multifaceted program for the creation of an Arts District in the Mid Town neighborhood to the City of Rockford. The proposal contains six individual programs/projects to be developed over the next three years . The Arts Initiative calls for funding from public , private & not-for -profit institutions .We have made a request for funds to cover start up cost and property acquisition in this years CDBG program.

Budget \$175,000 to \$250,000

A program and organization audit of the CDBG program : The audit to be performed by an independent organization with appropriate expertise to measure the success of current programs & funding The Audit should review the past 5 years of the Department history and include citizen a participation component.

Budget : \$35,000.00 to \$50,0000.00

The total cost of the low budget number for these projects is \$1,720,000.00 approximately

\$400,000.00 above the “carry-over” number in the 2007 program, thus with some modification to this years program all these projects are feasible in 2007. I encourage & your staff to quickly explore these possibilities .

Please note I am the President of the Riverfront Development Group and would benefit from the MidTown Arts Initiative grants .

In closing , thanks to you , for this opportunity to comment and I look forward to working with you in the future for health and economic prosperity of our community.

Best Regards ,

Edward M.McCullough
President
Riverfront Development Group
112 Regan St.
Rockford ,Il 61107

Date

Edward M. McCullough
President
Riverfront Development Group
112 Regan Street
Rockford, IL 61107

RE: Proposed 2007 City of Rockford Community Development Annual Plan

Dear Mr. McCollough:

Thank you for not only taking the time to attend one of the City of Rockford 2007 Community Development Annual Plan Public Hearings, but to also comment on the proposed plan. We value the opinions of citizens like yourself and appreciate your commitment to help us improve Rockford from a Community Development standpoint.

With that being said, let us move on to your October 30, 2006 correspondence. In this correspondence, you make reference to the estimated carry over dollars for the 2006 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program year. Your prior experience with the program should remind you that municipalities receiving CDBG funds are permitted to carry over 1.5 times the previous year's allocation. You cite these as 1.3 million dollars from our proposed 2007 budget. You also go on to provide seven suggested activities to utilize these dollars in program year 2007 with estimated budget ranges from low to high for each. The descriptions are brief and budgeted numbers would require more detail, but it does appear that each has merit and could possibly be implemented.

Consequently, please allow me to make the following points in regards to your correspondence:

- 1.) Although you advise our office to quickly explore any possibilities associated with your suggested activities, the timeline of your correspondence, (generated on October 30, 2006) does not allow for ample to time fully investigate these options prior executing the City Council approval process and meeting the November 15, 2006 required date of submission to HUD.

- 2.) Furthermore, even if there were ample time to thoroughly investigate each option, it would not be feasible to attempt to implement each of these new endeavors in the upcoming program year.
- 3.) It should also be noted that the majority if not all of these suggested activities would probably be considered public service activities. Accordingly, CDBG regulations limit the percentage of public service activities to 15% of a program year's projected budget. The proposed activities would exceed this cap alone.
- 4.) Lastly, it should also be noted that such proposed activities would involve sub-recipients to carry them out. Sub-recipient activities require matching dollars and sufficient evidence of such match in the form of committed dollars.

In summary, your interest and input in regards to proposed 2007 Community Development activities are both welcomed and well received. The importance of gaining views from various perspectives should never be underestimated. To that end, Community Development staff will be more than happy to examine each of your suggested activities in greater detail to determine the overall likelihood of implementing some of them in the upcoming year if additional funding is made available or years thereafter. Taking the four noted points into account, please work each of the identified entities to provide us with additional information pertaining to each program or activity in order to help facilitate this examination.

Once again, thank you for your interest and concerns in relationship to the Community Development needs of Rockford.

Sincerely,

Reid Montgomery
Community Development Director



CITY OF ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

425 EAST STATE STREET
61104

LAWRENCE J. MORRISSEY
MAYOR

REID MONTGOMERY
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

November 7, 2006

Cherene Sweeny
Rockford Housing Authority
223 South Winnebago
Rockford, Illinois 61102

Dear Ms. Sweeny,

I received your comments electronically from Andrea Hinrichs regarding the American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) program. Specifically, your comment was that you would like the program to be offered city-wide and assistance based on a sliding scale depending on which geographic area requires the most stability. This letter is in response to your comments.

First of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time, submitting comments and taking part in the citizen participation process.

We have completed our proposed budget for fiscal year 2007. We assumed new 2007 ADDI funds in the amount of \$20,000 for the program. Since we are an "early grantee" we do not know the exact amount of our annual allocation prior to our budget submittal but we do not expect it to be substantially higher.

We have taken your comments into consideration. But, this is a very small amount of money and will only assist approximately five or six households. Because of this, we feel it would be best to distribute the dollars in a concentrated area. The target area of northwest Rockford was selected because of the change in tenancy from homeownership to rental over recent years. Through ADDI funds, along with other programs such as the Employer Assistance Program, we hope to encourage homeownership and stability in this neighborhood. The Employer Assistance Program is targeted to all housing units within one mile of downtown Rockford and any of our existing Tax Increment Financing Districts.

Thank you once again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Vicki Manson
Neighborhood Development Administrator